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where you wash yourself. No baths. When a bell rang, we knew it was time to go to the eating-hall. This was a large hall, with long rows of tables. As I said, the first few days the food was "passing", later it wasn't terrible, but either there wasn't enough of it or we got the same food for days. Whenever it rained, there would be thick mud in the camp, and we used to spread planks for passageways. Whenever an official would visit the camp they would give the children a small piece of meat. There was nothing for the people to do. Sometimes there were parties in one barrack. There was one barrack for the guards, and it was near the entrance of the camp. A few hundred feet away was the bridge, under which flowed the TARN River. Near our end of it was a guard, every moment of the day. It was alright to leave the camp in the daytime, but when we reached the town of GAILLAC, the people were not allowed to buy anything which required ration stamps. One day a woman crossed the bridge and as she neared our end the guard reached her to see if she had anything hidden. Anyway, he found a bread on her, and took it away. Then the woman grabbed it out of the guard's hand, and threw it into the TARN River. She said she would rather throw it there than give it to the guards. A man brought some oil in a bottle, and the guard found it on him, and slapped him, besides taking it away. Once a friend and I went to GAILLAC. There I bought some rice. As we were nearing the bridge I put the package under my berret (cap) and continued to walk. I was trying to look as if nothing was the matter. As I reached the guard house, the guard opened my coat to see if I had anything. He did not think of looking at the right place. Once my parents bought some things in GAILLAC. As they reached the bridge they saw a farmer on his wagon. They asked if they could put the food in his wagon. Of course he didn't mind. My parents reached the guards. nothing was found on them. As they neared the camp, the farmer and his wagon was waiting, and he gave my parents the articles. It was nice of him. This was one way of smuggling food. There are many such stories, but I cannot tell most of them. Now we were in "Brens" Camp for one half year already. It was called "BRENS" because, not far from the camp was the village of Brens, which it was called after.

Some families had left the camp already. My father told us we were leaving. It was about 4 A.M. when I was woken up. My eyes were really half asleep. We had our packs ready. Some of our friends were awake in order to say "goodbye". We left the camp. We passed through the kitchen. Everything was quiet. There must not have been a guard. We crossed the TARN Bridge : for the last time". It was a cool morning. As we entered GAILLAC we headed straight for the station. On our way in one of the streets we encountered 2 men. They looked just like detectives. We were hoping they wouldn't stop us. Finally we went to the station. We didn't have such a thing as reserved tickets. As we arrived we hoped to catch an early train for TOULOUSE. Luck wasn't with us. In the station we met some friends who were also from camp. I believe they left before us. We were happy to see them. They were telling us that they're returning to Belgium. It was foolish to do. They left about 8 o'clock. We all sat down in the small station. Finally came a train, for TOULOUSE. We boarded it. We were very happy to be on our way.



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In a short while we were in the "Gare Matabiau" at TOULOUSE. The first thing we did was go to a hotel. We stayed until next day. Then we took a bus for VILLEMUR. Again we were going to return to VARENNES. In VILLEMUR we got off the bus. We bought some alcohol for our burner, when we arrived at Varennes. The walk was short. As we entered the village, we saw French troops. Anyway, we found out that French soldiers are now living with us. We did not get the same house as before. But everything was all right. My mother found 2 good friends. And "Jacki, my friend, was again my best friend. We went to the fields and loaded corn, and hay on the wagons. We picked grapes for his father (at the same time ate some)". We had good times together. In the meantime my father found a place to send us away to. Of course my parents hated to do this but it was the best. It was a children's colony near VICHY. Central France - From there my father told my sister and I that we would be able to go to AMERICA, and later help them come over. We did not like the idea at all, but finally agreed. I said "goodby" to my best friend Jacki. We packed and were on our way to TOULOUSE, we stayed in a cafe near the station. Our mother did not accompany us this time. As my father, sister, and I reached TOULOUSE we stayed at a cafe near the station until evening, where we met 2 brother and their sister, who was taking them to the same colony that we were going to. (We knew these 2 boys from Antwerp). It was a coincidence, meeting in this distant French city of Toulouse. They also were in "Camp de Brens" with us. Anyway, soon my father kissed us, and left for Varennes we were going with those brothers. In the cafe we talked together. We were to wait until 1 A.M. for our train, which was a slow one anyway. It was now about 7 P.M. We didn't do anything until about 10 o'clock. All of a sudden we saw our mother and father entering the cafe. We were so glad to see each other. My father explained that we were not going to leave tonight but tomorrow morning, with a faster train. We said "goodbye" to our friend and left for a hotel. Of course we ate. In the morning we were ready to leave. Just our father. Mother was going to remain at this hotel in Toulouse until our father came back. We boarded a train. Next day, early morning we reached Vichy, unoccupied French capital. It is a very small, but clean and interesting town. We went into a restaurant near the Post-Office. We waited in a small park for our bus. It finally arrived. We were on our way to "BROUT-VERNET", a small village near which this CHATEAU was situated. The name was CHATEAU DES MORELLES. In a half hour we reached Brout-Vernet. We asked some people, and they directed us the direction. We held our fathers hand and walked on a road (which we were going to walk on every morning and noon), we reached the end of the road, then followed a smaller road. There were many trees, but in a minute we arrived at our "home"; Chateau Des Morelles. We went to the principal. He showed my father through the dortoirs or sleeping rooms. There was one for small boys-for "in between" and for bigger boys. The same way with the girls. I slept in the "in between dortoir".- my sister in the "bigger girls".- By now our father had left. There were about 100 children, most of them from occupied Paris. The bell rang and we were on our way to the "Salle a manger" or eating hall. There were many small tables by which 4 children sat. As time past by we became very used and acquainted with the chateau and also its vicinity.